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Repertory Plays

Mary's Wedding

by

Gilbert Cannan

LeRoy Phillips, Boston

MARY'S WEDDING

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

FOUR PLAYS BY GILBERT CANNAN

JAMES AND JOHN - - - - *one act.*

MILES DIXON - - - - - *two acts.*

MARY'S WEDDING - - - - *one act.*

A SHORT WAY WITH AUTHORS, *one act.*

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A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

GILBERT CANNAN

Boston
LE ROY PHILLIPS
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Produced at the CORONET THEATRE,
May, 1912

CHARACTERS

Mary - - - -	Miss IRENE ROOKE.
Tom - - - -	Mr. HERBERT LOMAS.
Ann - - - -	Miss MARY GOULDEN.
Mrs. Airey - - -	Miss MURIEL PRATT.
Bill Airey - - -	Mr. CHARLES BIBBY.
Two Maids.	
Villagers and Others.	

CHARACTERS

Mary.

Tom.

Ann.

Mrs. Airey.

Bill Airey.

Two Maids.

Villagers and Others.

Scene: The Davis's Cottage.

NOTE. *There is no attempt made in the play to reproduce exactly the Westmorland dialect, which would be unintelligible to ears coming new to it, but only to catch the rough music of it and the slow inflection of northern voices.*

MARY'S WEDDING

The scene is the living-room in the Davis's cottage in the hill country. An old room low in the ceiling. ANN DAVIS *is at the table in the centre of the room untying a parcel. The door opens to admit* TOM DAVIS, *a sturdy quarryman dressed in his best and wearing a large nosegay.*

ANN

Well, 'ast seed un?

TOM

Ay, a seed un. 'Im and 'is ugly face ——

ANN

[*Untying her parcel.*] 'Tis 'er dress come just in time an' no more from the maker-up ——

TOM

Ef she wouldna do it. . . .

ANN

But 'tis such long years she's been a waitin'. . . . 'Tis long years since she bought t' dress.

TOM

An' 'tis long years she'll be a livin' wi' what she's been waitin' for; 'tis long years she'll live to think ower it and watch the thing she's

taken for her man, an' long years that she'll find 'un feedin' on 'er, an' a dreary round she'll 'ave of et. . . .

ANN

Three times she 'ave come to a month of weddin', an' three times 'e 'ave broke loose and gone down to the Mortal Man an' the woman that keeps 'arf our men in drink. . . . 'Tis she is the wicked one, giving 'em score an' score again 'till they owe more than they can ever pay with a year's money.

TOM

'Tis a fearful thing is drink. . . .

ANN

So I telled 'er in the beginnin' of it all, knowin' what like of man 'e was. An' so I telled 'er last night only.

TOM

She be set on it?

ANN

Ay, an' 'ere's t' pretty dress for 'er to be wedded in. . . .

TOM

What did she say?

ANN

Twice she 'ave broke wi' 'im, and twice she 'ave said that ef 'e never touched the drink fur six months she would go to be churched wi' 'im. She never 'ave looked at another man.

TOM

Ay, she be one o' they quiet ones that goes about their work an' never 'as no romantical notions but love only the more for et. There've been men come for 'er that are twice the man that Bill is, but she never looks up from 'er work at 'em.

ANN

I think she must 'a' growed up lovin' Bill. 'Tis a set thing surely.

TOM

An' when that woman 'ad 'im again an' 'ad 'im roaring drunk fur a week, she never said owt but turned to 'er work agin an' set aside the things she was makin' agin the weddin'. . . .

ANN

What did 'e say to 'er?

TOM

Nowt. 'E be 'most as chary o' words as she. 'E've got the 'ouse an' everything snug, and while 'e works 'e makes good money.

ANN

'Twill not end, surely.

TOM

There was 'is father and two brothers all broken men by it.

[*She hears* MARY *on the stairs, and they are silent.*

ANN

'Ere's yer pretty dress, Mary.

MARY

Ay. . . . Thankye, Tom.

TOM

'Twill be lovely for ye, my dear, an' grand. 'Tis a fine day fur yer weddin', my dear. . . .

MARY

I'll be sorry to go, Tom.

TOM

An' sorry we'll be to lose ye. . . .

MARY

I'll put the dress on.

[*She throws the frock over her arm and goes out with it.*

ANN

Another girl would 'a' wedded him years ago in the first foolishness of it. But Mary, for all she says so little, 'as long, long thoughts that never comes to the likes o' you and me. . . . Another girl, when the day 'ad come at last, would 'a' been wild wi' the joy an' the fear o' it. . . . But Mary, she's sat on the fells under the stars, an' windin' among the sheep. D' ye mind the nights she's been out like an old shepherd wi' t' sheep? D' ye mind the nights when she was but a lile 'un an' we found 'er out in the dawn sleepin' snug again the side o' a fat ewe?

TOM

'Tis not like a weddin' day for 'er. . . . If she'd 'ad a new dress, now ——

ANN

I said to 'er would she like a new dress; but she would have only the old 'un, cut an' shaped to be in the fashion. . . . Et 'as been a strange coortin', an' 'twill be a strange life for 'em both, I'm thinkin', for there seems no gladness in 'er, nor never was, for she never was foolish an' she never was young; but she was always like there was a great weight on 'er, so as she must be about the world alone, but always she 'ave turned to the little things an' the weak, an' always she 'ad some poor sick beast for tendin' or another woman's babe to 'old to 'er breast, an' I think sometimes that 'tis only because Bill is a poor sick beast wi' a poor sick soul that she be so set on 'im.

TOM

'E be a sodden beast wi' never a soul to be saved or damned ——

ANN

'Cept for the drink, 'e've been a good son to 'is old mother when the others 'ud 'a' left 'er to rot i' the ditch, an' 'e was the on'y one as 'ud raise a finger again his father when the owd man, God rest him, was on to 'er like a madman. Drunk or sober 'e always was on 'is mother's side.

TOM

'Twas a fearfoul 'ouse that.

ANN

'Twas wonderful that for all they did to 'er, that wild old man wi' 'is wild young sons, she outlived 'em all, but never a one could she save from the curse that was on them, an' sober, they was the likeliest men i' Troutbeck. . . .

TOM

'Tis when the rain comes and t' clouds come low an' black on the fells and the cold damp eats into a man's bones that the fearful thoughts come to 'im that must be drowned or 'im go mad — an' only the foreigners like me or them as 'as foreign blood new in 'em can 'old out again it; 'tis the curse o' livin' too long between two line o' 'ills.

ANN

An' what that owd woman could never do, d'ye think our Mary'll do it? 'Im a Troutbeck man an' she a Troutbeck girl?

TOM

She've 'eld to 'er bargain an' brought 'im to it.

ANN

There's things that a maid can do that a wife cannot, an' that's truth, an' shame it is to the men. [*Comes a knock at the door.*] 'Tisn't time for t' weddin' folk.

[TOM *goes to the window.*

TOM

Gorm. 'Tis Mrs. Airey.

ANN

T'owd woman. She that 'as not been further than 'er garden-gate these ten years?

[*She goes to the door, opens it to admit* MRS. AIREY, *an old gaunt woman just beginning to be bent with age.*

MRS. AIREY

Good day to you, Tom Davis.

TOM

Good day to you, Mrs. Airey.

MRS. AIREY

Good day to you, Ann Davis.

ANN

Good day to you, Mrs. Airey. Will ye sit down?

[*She dusts a chair and* MRS. AIREY *sits by the fireside. She sits silent for long while.* TOM *and* ANN *look uneasily at her and at each other.*

MRS. AIREY

So 'tis all ready for Bill's wedding.

TOM

Ay. 'Tis a fine day, an' the folks bid, and the sharry-bang got for to drive to Coniston, all the party of us. Will ye be coming, Mrs. Airey?

MRS. AIREY

I'll not. [MRS. AIREY *sits silent again for long.*] Is Mary in the 'ouse?

ANN

She be upstairs, puttin' on 'er weddin' dress.

MRS. AIREY

'Tis the sad day of 'er life. . . . They're a rotten lot, an' who should know et better than me? Bill's the best of 'em, but Bill's rotten. . . . Six months is not enough, nor six years nor sixty, not while 'er stays in Troutbeck rememberin' all that 'as been an' all the trouble that was in the 'ouse along o' it, and so I've come for to say it.

ANN

She growed up lovin' Bill, and 'tis a set thing. She've waited long years. 'Tis done now, an' what they make for theirselves they make, an' 'tis not for us to go speirin' for the trouble they may make for theirselves, but only to pray that it may pass them by. . . .

MRS. AIREY

But 'tis certain. . . . Six months is not enough, nor six years nor sixty ——

ANN

And are ye come for to tell Mary this . . . ?

MRS. AIREY

This and much more. . . .

TOM

And what 'ave ye said to Bill?

MRS. AIREY

Nowt. There never was a son would give 'eed to 'is mother. . . . 'Tisn't for 'im I'm thinkin', but for t' children that she'll bear 'im. I 'oped, and went on 'opin' till there was no 'ope left in me, and I lived to curse the day that each one of my sons was born. John and Peter are dead an' left no child behind, and it were better for Bill also to leave no child behind. There's a day and 'alf a day o' peace and content for a woman with such a man, and there's long, long years of thinkin' on the peace and content that's gone. There's long, long years of watching the child that you've borne and suckled turn rotten, an' I say that t' birth-pangs are nowt to t' pangs that ye 'ave from the childer of such a man as Bill or Bill's father. . . . She's a strong girl, an' a good girl; but there's this that is stronger than 'er.

[MARY *comes again, very pretty in her blue dress. She is at once sensible of the strangeness in* TOM *and* ANN. *She stands looking from one to the other.* MRS. AIREY *sits gazing into the fire.*

MARY

Why, mother, . . . 'tis kind of you to come on this morning.

MRS. AIREY

Ay, 'tis kind of me. [ANN *steals away upstairs and* TOM, *taking the lead from her, goes out into the road.*] Come 'ere, my pretty.

[MARY *goes and stands by her.*

MARY

The sun is shining and the bees all ou and busy to gather in the 'oney.

MRS. AIREY

'Tis the bees as is t' wise people to work away in t' dark when t' sun is hidden, and to work away in t' sun when 'tis bright and light. 'Tis the bees as is t' wise people that takes their men an' kills 'em for the 'arm that they may do, and it's us that's the foolish ones to make soft the way of our men an' let them strut before us and lie; and 'tis us that's the foolish ones ever to give a thought to their needs that give never a one to ours.

MARY

'Tis us that's t' glorious ones to 'elp them that is so weak, and 'tis us that's the brave and the kind ones to let them 'ave the 'ole world to play with when they will give never a thought to us that gives it t' 'em.

MRS. AIREY

My pretty, my pretty, there's never a one of us can 'elp a man that thinks 'isself a man an' strong, poor fool, an' there's never a one

of us can 'elp a man that's got a curse on 'im and is rotten through to t' bone, an' not one day can you be a 'elp to such a man as this. . . .

MARY

There's not one day that I will not try, and not one day that I will not fight to win 'im back. . . .

MRS. AIREY

The life of a woman is a sorrowful thing. . . .

MARY

For all its sorrow, 'tis a greater thing than t' life of a man . . . an' so I'll live it. . . .

MRS. AIREY

Now you're strong and you're young. — 'Ope's with ye still and life all before ye — and so I thought when my day came, and so I did. There was a day and 'alf a day of peace and content, and there was long, long years of thinking on the peace and content that are gone. . . . Four men all gone the same road, and me left looking down the way that they are gone and seeing it all black as the pit. . . . I be a poor old woman now, with never a creature to come near me in kindness, an' I was such a poor old woman before ever the 'alf of life was gone, an' so you'll be if you take my son for your man. He's the best of my sons,

but I curse the day that ever he was born. . . .

MARY

There never was a man the like of Bill. If ye see 'un striding the 'ill, ye know 'tis a man by 'is strong, long stride; and if ye see 'un leapin' an' screein' down th' 'ill, ye know 'tis a man; and if ye see 'un in t' quarry, ye know 'tis a strong man. . . .

MRS. AIREY

An' if ye see 'un lyin' drunk i' the ditch, not roarin' drunk, but rotten drunk, wi' 'is face fouled an' 'is clothes mucked, ye know 'tis the lowest creature of the world. . . .
[MARY *stands staring straight in front of her.*

MARY

Is it for this that ye come to me to-day?

MRS. AIREY

Ay, for this: that ye may send 'un back to 'is rottenness, for back to it 'e'll surely go when 'tis too late, an' you a poor old woman like me, with never a creature to come near ye in kindness, before ever the bloom 'as gone from your bonny cheeks, an' maybe childer that'll grow up bonny an' then be blighted for all the tenderness ye give to them; an' those days will be the worst of all — far worse than the day when ye turn

for good an' all into yourself from t' man that will give ye nowt. . . . 'Tis truly the bees as is the wise people. . . .

MARY

It's a weary waitin' that I've had, and better the day and 'alf a day of peace and content with all the long years of thinking on it than all the long, long years of my life to go on waitin' and waitin' for what has passed me by, for if he be the rottenest, meanest man in t' world that ever was made, there is no other that I can see or ever will. It is no wild foolishness that I am doing: I never was like that; but it's a thing that's growed wi' me an' is a part o' me — an' though every day o' my life were set before me now so I could see to the very end, an' every day sadder and blacker than the last, I'd not turn back. I gave 'im the bargain, years back now, and three times 'e 'as failed me; but 'e sets store by me enough to do this for me a fourth time — 'Twas kind of ye to come. . . .

MRS. AIREY

You're strong an' you're young, but there's this that's stronger than yourself ——

MARY

Maybe, but 'twill not be for want o' fightin' wi' 't.

MRS. AIREY

'Twill steal on ye when you're weakest, an' come on ye in your greatest need. . . .

MARY

It 'as come to this day an' there is no goin' back. D' ye think I've not seed t' soft, gentle things that are given to other women, an' not envied them? D' ye think I've not seed 'em walkin' shut-eyed into all sorts o' foolishness an' never askin' for the trewth o' it, an' not envied 'em for doin' that? D' ye think I've not seed the girls I growed wi' matin' lightly an' lightly weddin', an' not envied 'em for that, they wi' a 'ouse an' babes an' me drudgin' away on t' farm, me wi' my man to 'and an' only this agin 'im? D' ye think I've not been tore in two wi' wantin' to close my eyes an' walk like others into it an' never think what is to come? There's many an' many a night that I've sat there under t' stars wi' t' three counties afore me an' t' sea, an' t' lake below, an' t' sheep croppin', an' my own thoughts for all the comp'ny that I 'ad, an' fightin' this way an' that for to take 'un an' let 'un be so rotten as ever 'e might be; an' there's many an' many a night when the thoughts come so fast that they hurt me an' I lay pressed close to t' ground wi' me 'ands clawin' at it an' me teeth bitin' into t' ground for to get closer an' 'ide from myself; an' many a night

when I sat there seein' the man as t' brave lad 'e was when I seed 'un first leapin' down the 'ill, an' knowin' that nothin' in the world, nothin' that I could do to 'un or that 'e could do 'isself, would ever take that fro' me. . . . In all the time o' my weary waitin' there 'as never been a soul that I told so much to, an' God knows there never 'as been an' never will be a time when I can tell as much to 'im. . . .

MRS. AIREY

My pretty, my pretty, 'tis a waste an' a wicked, wicked waste. . . .

MARY

'Tis a day an' 'alf a day agin never a moment. . . .

MRS. AIREY

'Tis that, and so 'tis wi' all o' us . . . an' so 'twill be. . . . God bless ye, my dear. . . .

[ANN *comes down.* MARY *is looking out of the window.*

ANN

Ye forgot the ribbon for yer 'air, that I fetched 'specially fro' t' town.

MARY

Why, yes. Will ye tie it, Ann?

[ANN *ties the ribbon in her hair.*

MRS. AIREY

Pretty, my dear, oh! pretty ——

MARY

I'm to walk to t' church o' Tom's arm . . . ?

ANN

An' I to Tom's left; wi' the bridesmaids be'ind, an' the rest a followin'. . . .

[TOM *returns, followed by two* GIRLS *bringing armfuls of flowers. With these they deck the room, and keep the choicest blooms for* MARY. ANN *and the three girls are busied with making* MARY *reach her most beautiful.* MRS. AIREY *goes. At intervals one* VILLAGER *and another comes to give greeting or to bring some small offering of food or some small article of clothing.* MARY *thanks them all with rare natural grace. They call her fine, and ejaculate remarks of admiration: "The purty bride. . . ." "She's beautiful. . . ." "'Tis a lucky lad, Bill Airey. . . ." The church bell begins to ring. . . . All is prepared and all are ready. . . .* MARY *is given her gloves, which she draws on — when the door is thrown open and* BILL AIREY *lunges against the lintel of the door and stands leering. He is just sober enough to know what he is at. He is near tears, poor wretch. He is not horribly drunk. He stands surveying the group and they him.*

BILL

I come — I come — I — I c-come for to — to — to — show — to show myself . . .

[HE *turns in utter misery and goes.* MARY *plucks the flowers from her bosom and lets them fall to the ground; draws her gloves off her hands and lets them fall. The bell continues to ring.*

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